

# Ranfully

# Review

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# The Ranfurly Review

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# Editorial

Welcome to the ninth (and very late) issue of the Ranfurly Review. This issue, which was meant or publication in December, has been delayed for several reasons all of which were our own fault.

For this we apologise.

By way of supporting our apology we are delighted to be able to say that this issue contains something a little special, a full feature interview with the 2009 [Poetry Super Highway](#) Annual Contest winner, Jim Knowles.

As always we hope you enjoy the rest of the magazine, and trust you will forgive us in time for this delay of one month.

## **Editor's Choice Award for Issue 9**

***Stella of Rose Street* by Keith Armstrong**

Cheers!

**Colin Galbraith**  
**Editor/Publisher**  
**December 2009**  
[www.colingalbraith.co.uk](http://www.colingalbraith.co.uk)

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## Samosa by Shome Dasgupta

All he wore was a piece of blue cloth around his waist; he was bald and wore no shoes or sandals, and the shining whites of his eyes contrasted the dark color of his skin -- like a soft boiled egg placed next to a burnt piece of bacon. He crouched and rested his back against the building of a clothing store. I stood outside of the building and watched Kolkata walk past me. Some carried briefcases, others held baskets on top of their heads -- they all were going to work, I assumed. Some children dressed in blue sweater-vests and navy blue shorts biked to and from school with frowning faces, while other children, covered in torn brown and white cloths, played with the water pump, laughing and shouting, as their mothers went from car to car, person to person, asking for money or books. The buses sped as usual, the pedestrians screamed at the bus drivers as usual, the cars honked, the famished stray dogs searched through piles of trash and competed with the flies, and the homeless people lived without homes. It all made me wonder. It made me wonder, who are we? Who am I? We are all just animals.

I assumed the man crouched against the clothing store was homeless. He took care of himself well though, as he squeezed lemon juice onto his hands to clean his fingernails. My knuckles stung as I ran my hands through my hair. I bit my knuckles, trying to create another pain. The man's skinny frame almost revealed the beating of his heart against his ribs. Mosquitoes hovered around his feet, but the insects didn't seem to bother him -- they looked like they were worshiping the man, moving in a circular motion like some kind of ritual. He casually cleaned his fingernails and was oblivious to the rest of the world. I licked the tops of my hands.

I crouched down beside him to rest my legs for I had been standing outside the building for twenty minutes observing everyone and everything. The winds caused by the fast traveling vehicles helped bring the smell of fish, lentils, and lamb from the food huts down the street. I intended to stay for about another ten minutes before eating lunch -- the smell of curry was quite appetizing. As I wiped my forehead, I heard a clinking sound and looked at the ground to see a few rupees rolling around. I guessed some pedestrians dropped it as they walked by. I didn't pick it up, but let them roll around for a few seconds until they lay still on the sidewalk. They stopped in between the homeless guy, who was still cleaning his fingernails, and me. He didn't pick the coins up, nor did he look at them. The man continued to squeeze lemon juice onto his hands, and

I rubbed my hands against my body. A few seconds later, another pedestrian dropped a couple of coins in front of us. I looked at the homeless man again, but he did not seem to notice the coins rolling on the ground. The rupees came to a stop between us. I looked at him and he threw the squished lemons to the edge of the sidewalk. The mosquitoes continued to hover around his feet.

"Take," a man said.

I looked up and saw a man dressed in brown slacks and a pink button-up collared shirt. He had neatly combed hair, which matched well with his finely trimmed mustache and beard. The man held some bills in his hand. He gently grabbed my arm and placed the bills in my hand, but I just let them drop to the ground.

"Take," he said. "Find some food."

He walked away.

"Sir," I said. "I do not want this money. I do not need any money. I am just resting my legs."

The man turned around, waved, and continued to walk away. He gave me five hundred rupees. I looked at the homeless man, and he was eating a banana. He took small bites and gently peeled it after each taste. I felt dizzy -- the world was going in circles around me, creating a whirring sound, a whirlpool in my head. The man did not look at me, nor did he look at the amount of bills I placed in the middle, where the rest of the coins were. After he finished the banana he threw it to the edge of the curb next to the lemons. He then proceeded to urinate against the wall of the clothing store. My stomach hurt. I gave him his privacy, looked the other way, and saw a woman drop some more coins in front of me.

"What are you doing?" I asked. "I am not homeless, nor am I a beggar. I don't need your money."

The lady smiled, touched my shoulder, and walked off.

"Take it," she said. "Find some food."

"I am not hungry."

She tilted her head and looked at me like I was a baby, distorting her face, scrunching it up, stretching her cheeks, and opening her mouth like she was about to drink from a straw. She placed her hand on my head and walked away.

The homeless man finished urinating and crouched back down. He began to sing and clap his hands. A group of people, after dropping a combination of coins and bills next to me, gathered around the lemon scented man and began to clap in harmony with him. They stood in a circle and danced as the homeless man closed his eyes and beautifully sang a love song. I remained outside of the group but could not resist from moving in rhythm to his voice as well. More

coins were placed beside me. After the homeless man finished singing, the crowd dispersed, and he took out a mango and peeled it with a penknife. I was dehydrated; I tried to quench my thirst with my own saliva. Again, more pedestrians were giving me money, and I pushed it to the middle, but the homeless man did not appear interested in the accumulation of coins and bills.

"Take," one man said. "Find some food."

"No thank you," I replied. "I do not need any money. I have a home. I am not a beggar."

The man continued to walk away. The homeless man sucked on the seed of the mango. Not once did he look at me nor the money. I licked my lips.

"Hey," a man said. "Leave at once."

The man's voice was stern. I turned my head and saw a man who wore a security officer's uniform, dressed in all black. He had a thick mustache and parted hair. The top of his black boots came to his mid-shins, and his tan uniform was short sleeved and covered in dust. His belt was shiny. He must work for the clothing store, looking for thieves or any other kind of troublesome people.

"Leave at once," the man said.

I looked at the homeless man but he did not look at me or the security officer. He continued to suck on the mango seed.

"Me?" I asked.

The security officer pointed towards me and then to a direction down the street.

"Leave," he said.

He stamped his foot against the sidewalk, trying to scare me. He clapped his hands, and then he raised them like he was going to slap me.

"Hut," he shouted. "Hut! Hut!"

"I'm just resting my legs," I said. "I am doing no harm."

"Go," the man said.

"Why?" I asked.

"You're getting in the way," he replied. "We don't let strays stay outside the store. It's bad for the business. The customers won't come anymore if they see beggars hanging around outside the store."

"I'm not a beggar," I replied. "It's shady here, and I just want to relax."

"Are you going to buy something?" he asked.

A man and a woman, holding hands, walked by and stopped and laughed.

"Go easy," the woman said. "It's hot. Give him some water."

"Then he will keep on coming back," the security officer said. "Move along."

The man placed some money at my feet, and the couple walked away.

"No," I said. "I don't need anything."

"No loitering," the security officer said. "I will have you arrested."

"But this man here is homeless, and he's been sitting here just as long as I have," I said. "He is loitering as well then."

"I will have you arrested for loitering and troublemaking."

"But look at him," I said. "He's practically naked, and he urinated on your building, and he's been throwing lemons and banana peels. I am just sitting here."

I looked at the homeless man, who had finished sucking the juice from the mango seed, and he threw the seed and the mango peels to the edge of the curb where the lemons and the banana peel lay. He then proceeded to floss his teeth with a thin strip of the mango skin. My gums started to bleed -- I spat and saw tiny dots of red in my spit.

"Take your money and go," the security officer said. "You have begged enough for the day. Find another place to bother."

"That's not my money," I said. "People have been dropping it here for some reason. I guess maybe for him."

I nodded my head towards the homeless man.

"Why aren't you telling him anything?" I asked.

"The store has strict policies," the guard replied. "We will lose customers because of you."

I stood up, and the homeless man remained crouched and silent. The security officer grabbed me by the ear and pulled me away from the front of the clothing store. He shoved me and I fell to the ground. The officer walked back into the building. I stood up, wiped the dust off my arms, and walked back to the front of the store. A young student, holding books in one hand, walked by and dropped some more coins next to my feet.

"Find some food," she said. "Take."

I kicked the coins against the building and cursed. My stomach hurt. I crouched down and splattered the wall with whatever was inside my intestines. The security officer came outside.

"Hey," the man shouted. "Come here. I will knock your head off. You swine."

The man started to run towards me. I spat on the window multiple times. When the security officer reached me, I gave him a slight push which caused him to stumble over. I picked up some of

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the money that was on the ground, and ran away, holding the rupees with my mouth. A few blocks down, I found a small restaurant and waited by the trashcan. It was here, as I sniffed the floor and licked the countertops, that I realized that people had mistaken me for a mongrel.

"I am no mongrel," I shouted. "I am no mongrel!"

No one inside of the restaurant looked at me. Someone threw away a half-eaten samosa into the trashcan.

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# Poetry by Keith Armstrong

## Stella of Rose Street

*(in memory of Stella Cartwright, 1937-1985)*

*"Dear George, it is so strange, our souls seem to fly together joyously over mountains and seas while each of us in our mutual way suffers agonies."*

*~ Stella Cartwright*

*"An orgasm with Miss Cartwright was metaphysical, transcendental, like nothing else you can ever imagine. She seemed built for love."*

*~ Stanley Roger Green*

*"You placed me on a pedestal / according to my lights / but what you didn't know, my dear / I have no head for heights."*

*~ Norman MacCaig*

It was so much gabble,  
 fantasies of genius in the Little Kremlin.  
 Once, I fell for it myself,  
 tottering along the red carpet,  
 poetry dribbling into my own vomit,  
 or maybe it was Hugh's,  
 all mixed up  
 in the whisky of empty promises.

I talked in Milne's Bar to a shop steward  
 who'd help build MacDiarmid's bog.  
 He said the workmen had their tea in Grieve's posh wee cups  
 and saw the reckoning in the leaves.  
 He yapped as auld poets glowered from their photos  
 and we downed chilled ale  
 to drown the memories of a Juniper Green girl  
 with a pint of that Muse again.

.../continued

They must have seen joy in you our Stella  
to wrench them from their word play,  
to take a lovely shag to brighten up their anxious lines.  
Och the happiness and the pain  
of drinking  
that smiler with the knife  
comes to get us all.  
And that lonely honey George  
must have driven you nuts  
romancing you in the Pentland Hills  
and kissing you full on your lips  
one damp Saturday afternoon  
by the Water of Leith.

They say 'the best poem is silence'  
but you were a shriek in the ecstasy  
of loving and of agony,  
a naked drunken howl.  
The saintly saviour of hurt animals  
and a shopper for the sick,  
you wanted to wrap yourself around  
something you could trust,  
wanted a photograph of a true poetry lover  
held to your lovely breasts  
to make a change from the piss  
of Milne's Bar  
and the daily Abbotsford drivel.

What you found was madness in a Zimmer Frame at thirty,  
splashes of alcohol and tears lit  
by the sudden flashes of beautiful orgasms,  
the sunshine today  
in all the muck  
along Rose Street.

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# Some Dinosaurs Die in Their Sleep

## by Allen Kopp

Evelyn was serving a thirty-day sentence in the county jail and, in her absence, Vicki-Vicki was in charge. She had to see that Baby Eddie took his medicine when he was supposed to and didn't make himself sick eating too much candy and that Veradean stayed in school and that they were both in the house and in bed asleep by around midnight every night. She didn't set them a lot of rules, hating rules herself, but she still managed somehow to keep them in line.

On a warm September afternoon, when Evelyn had been away for six days (with twenty-four more to go), Vicki-Vicki, Baby Eddie, and Veradean were sitting in the front room of the little house that always smelled a little like cabbage cooking. (The smell was really from faulty sewer pipes.)

Baby Eddie was lying on his back on the dilapidated sofa, eating grapes. He was four years old and sick a lot of the time because he had been born with weak lungs and sometimes had trouble breathing. He was wearing a pair of red plaid shorts that were too little for him, without any underpants underneath, and a girl's pink blouse that belonged to Veradean before she outgrew it. Vicki-Vicki told him to sit up to eat the grapes because he was going to get choked, but he just ignored her.

With her Big Chief tablet resting along her thighbones, Veradean was writing a theme for school about dinosaurs. She wrote that dinosaurs are big and ugly and scary and, if you see one, you'd better run and hide because it will chase you and catch you and stomp you with its big feet and then eat you in pieces. Being eaten in pieces is much more painful than being eaten all at once. Dinosaurs sleep inside a mountain, unless, of course, the mountain interrupts, and when that happens, dinosaurs have to find someplace else to sleep. Before a dinosaur goes to sleep, it licks itself all over and scratches its fleas and then it lays down on its side like a big dog. Some dinosaurs die in their sleep and then their bones are found millions of years later by a person looking for gold in the desert.

She drew a picture in the margin of a dinosaur that looked like a skinny horse with the head of a snake, and then she handed the paper to Vicki-Vicki to check for spelling. Vicki-Vicki wasn't very good at spelling, herself, but she found an error or two, for which Veradean was grateful. Miss Fingers, her teacher, insisted on correct spelling and she would deduct from an otherwise good grade if she found any misspelled words. Vicki-Vicki asked Veradean about the picture in the

margin and Veradean said she drew it because Miss Fingers liked pictures and she would give extra credit for a picture that she liked and hadn't ask for.

Vicki-Vicki referred to Baby Eddie and Veradean as her brother and sister (when she referred to them at all), but the truth was she was only partly related to them. They were her half-brother and half-sister, since all three of them had different fathers.

Vicki-Vicki knew who her father was and what he looked like, but he was a shadowy figure in her life and she had never spoken more than a few words to him, if at all. She noticed him at times hanging around on the very edge of things. He seemed to be watching and waiting, but what he was waiting for no one could say. If she ever tried to approach him to have a word with him, he always ran away.

"When can I go to school?" Baby Eddie asked, or rather screamed, from the sofa.

"When *you* go to school," Veradean said, "it'll be to retarded school. They'll send the retarded bus every day to pick you up."

Baby Eddie threw a grape at her and when she threw it back, he covered his face and squealed.

"Be quiet, you two," Vicki-Vicki said. "You give me a headache."

"Hey, I'm hungry!" Baby Eddie said.

"Me too," Veradean said. "When do we eat?"

Vicki-Vicki went into the kitchen to see what she might fix for dinner. She had been to the store a couple of times since Evelyn went to jail and she didn't have much money left. She had to figure some way to make the money last, or she was going to have to get more.

She opened a can of vegetable soup and heated it on the stove and when it was ready she halved it into two bowls for Veradean and Baby Eddie. She found some crackers that weren't too stale and she ate some tuna fish right out of the can on the crackers while Veradean and Baby Eddie had the soup. For dessert she opened a can of fruit cocktail and divided it into three little bowls.

When they were finished eating she washed the dishes and put them away and then went back into the living room, where Baby Eddie and Veradean were playing Parcheesi on the floor. Most of the Parcheesi pieces had been lost, but they were able to improvise with what they had. Veradean was cheating but Baby Eddie didn't realize it.

"Let's turn on the TV," Baby Eddie said.

"It's broken," Vicki-Vicki said.

Baby Eddie knew the TV was broken, but every day he said "Let's turn on the TV," as if saying the words would fix the TV.

"When can we get the TV fixed?" Veradean asked. "We're missing all the good shows."

"You don't need to be watching TV all the time," Vicki-Vicki said. "It rots your brain, anyway."

"It doesn't rot *my* brain," Baby Eddie said.

"What are we supposed to do without TV?" Veradean asked.

"Don't ask me," Vicki-Vicki said. "Why don't you go outside and get some fresh air?"

"I've had enough fresh air for today."

"Read a book then. Stand on your head. I don't care."

It was now fully dark outside and they heard a car pull up in front of the house. Baby Eddie ran to the screen door and looked out to see who it was.

"It's only Adolph," he said.

"Tell him there's nobody at home," Vicki-Vicki said.

Adolph was her mother's most recent boyfriend, one in a long line of boyfriends. Vicki-Vicki hated him because she had seen him kick a dog once and he had blackened Evelyn's eye and split her lip. She didn't trust him and she didn't like his looks. He had a flat-top haircut and beady eyes and bulging cheeks that made him look like a rodent. If she had liked him, she might have asked him to lend them some money until Evelyn got out of jail, but she would never ask Adolph for anything. She knew he would expect something in return.

"There's nobody home!" Baby Eddie said as Adolph walked up the steps to the front door. He started to slam the door, but by then Adolph was up the steps and had caught the door with his monkey-like arm to keep it from closing.

"Very funny," Adolph said. "Is that any way to treat a guest?" He came inside the house as though he owned it.

"Evelyn isn't here," Vicki-Vicki said. "She's in jail."

"I know," Adolph said. "I heard."

"Why don't you just turn around and leave, then?"

"That's not a very nice way to speak to me," Adolph said. "You hurt my feelings. Haven't you ever heard of having respect for your elders?"

"You're not *my* elder," Vicki-Vicki said.

Veradean laughed and Adolph sat down on the end of the couch and sprawled his big legs. His belly hung over his belt.

"Will you play Parcheesi with me?" Baby Eddie asked.

"I don't play games," Adolph said.

"Do you know how to fix the TV?" Veradean asked.

"Hell, no. That's not what I'm here for."

"What *are* you here for?" Vicki-Vicki asked.

"Since Evelyn's in jail, I wanted to stop by and see if you need anything."

"We need a refrigerator full of food," Vicki-Vicki said.

"That's not what I meant. I thought you might like to go for a little drive with me. We could stop someplace and get a little drink."

"Why would we want to do that?" Vicki-Vicki asked.

"I don't mean *all* of you," Adolph said. "I just mean *you*."

Veradean laughed when she understood what Adolph was saying. "Uh-oh!" she said. "I think somebody's got a crush on Vicki-Vicki!"

"You shut up with that kind of talk!" Adolph said.

"I'm expecting my boyfriend any minute," Vicki-Vicki said. "I don't think he'd like it if I was out with you when he came."

"Oh, you haven't got a boyfriend and you know it!" Adolph said.

"Yes, she does!" Baby Eddie said. "I've seen him."

"What would you know, you little son of a bitch?"

"You'd better watch who you're calling names!" Vicki-Vicki said. "Why don't you just go on home now? It's time for the kids to be in bed. Veradean has got school in the morning."

"Hey!" Veradean said. "I never go to bed this early!"

"Why don't *you* put the kids to bed," Adolph said to Vicki-Vicki, "and after you've done that you can come and sit next to me on this filthy old couch and you and I can have a nice little chat?" He patted the sofa next to where he was sitting and gave Vicki-Vicki his most provocative look.

"I'm going to bed, too," Vicki-Vicki said. "I've got a headache."

"Look," Adolph said, "how about if I give these two kids some money to go to the store down the street to get an ice cream?"

"I'm not going anywhere," Veradean said.

"I'll go!" Baby Eddie said.

"You can't go alone," Vicki-Vicki said. "You'll get run over."

"Veradean can go with me!"

"The way to a kid's heart is always through his stomach," Adolph laughed. He reached into his pocket and pulled out a handful of change and handed it to Veradean. "And if there's any left over," he said, "you and the little fellah can split it."

"Just let me go put on my shoes," Baby Eddie said excitedly.

"Is it all right?" Veradean asked Vicki-Vicki. "Will you be all right?"

"I think I can take care of myself," Vicki-Vicki said. She was a little disappointed that Veradean had given in so easily.

Vicki-Vicki watched as Veradean and Baby Eddie went out the door. "Come right back," she said, "and stay away from those kids down the street. They'll just get you into trouble."

Now that Vicki-Vicki was alone with Adolph, she realized she wasn't afraid of him—only annoyed. If she had had a knife, she would have gladly stabbed him in the heart with it.

"Now, that's more like it," Adolph said. "Come sit next to me." He patted the couch again.

She sat on the other end of the sofa with three feet of space between them. She was naturally curious to see what he was going to do. He was a fat fool and she knew she was a lot smarter than he was. She knew how to handle him.

"I always thought you were so pretty," Adolph said. He moved closer to her and stroked her arm just above the elbow.

"You did? I didn't know you ever even noticed me."

He smiled, believing he was softening her up. "I couldn't show it around your mother," he said. "She wouldn't have liked it. But now that she's not here, anything goes." He bent over toward her and tried to kiss her on the side of the neck, but she pulled away.

"Don't do that!" she said. "I can't stand to have anybody fooling around with my neck."

"Don't you like me just a little bit?"

"No!"

"Now, I know you've been with a man before, so you don't need to play the innocent with me."

"How do you know that? I never told anybody about that!"

"Things have a way of getting around."

"I think you'd better just go now." She stood up and walked toward the door, hoping he would do the same.

"Not until you give me a kiss."

"I'd rather kiss a red-hot iron! I'd rather kiss a pig wallowing around in a mud hole!"

"I could help you a lot if you'd just give me the chance."

"Look, my boyfriend's coming any minute, and he won't like it if he comes in and sees you trying to paw me. His name is Norman. He's jealous and he's very good with guns and knives. He's been in prison before."

Adolph looked at her, not sure if she was telling the truth or not. Finally, he stood up from the couch, smiling. "Well," he said, "you may have won this round, but you haven't won the war. I'll be back."

As he started to go out the door, he stopped and looked at her again. "Remember what I said and think it over," he said. "I could help you and those kids with food and whatnot, but you'd have to change

your attitude toward me. You'd have to be awful nice toward me. If you and the little ones get hungry enough, you know where you can find me."

"I don't think we'd ever get that hungry," Vicki-Vicki said.

After Adolph was gone, she laid down on the couch and covered her face with her arms and cried. She was crying because life was just too much to bear sometimes, but mostly she was crying because she didn't really have a boyfriend named Norman.

The next day, in the afternoon, she took an ambling walk on Main Street, looking into the store windows at the coats and fall merchandise. She was thinking about how she might go into a store and put on a new winter coat and walk out without paying for it, but then she remembered that Evelyn was in jail for that very thing and she didn't want to end up like her.

When she returned home at about three o'clock, she saw from the sidewalk that an envelope was sticking out of the front door. She thought it might be a court summons or an eviction notice, but when she went up the steps and took the envelope in her hand, she saw that her own name was printed on it in block letters, in a hand that she didn't recognize.

She opened the envelope and took out a piece of paper, folded up like a letter. She unfolded the letter to see what was written on it, but it was blank. Folded up inside, though, were two fifty-dollar bills. She turned the paper over, thinking she might have missed something, but the back of the paper was as blank as the front. Not even a signature.

She went out to the sidewalk in front of the house and looked first one way and then the other to see if she might catch a glimpse of who had left the envelope, but she saw no one—only a cat standing on the curb across the street looking at her suspiciously with its strangely slanted eyes.

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# Poetry by David Scheeler

## Mirrors

She walks wet pavement  
on a warm summer eve.  
Neon-streaked colors  
flow on dusk's sleek streets.  
Attentive, she listens;  
feeling the pulse  
that follows the storm.

A fat city sparrow  
refreshes his feathers.  
Puffed in a pool,  
admires  
his tawny and gray.

A glance in his mirror  
to find what it knows,  
after the rain;  
is it herself that it shows or

a glimpse of sky colors  
beginning to fade  
splashed on this puddle  
leafy reflections  
lacing her evening  
in cool summer shade.

Glance in a window  
blurred blue in the twilight:  
quenched wet with laughter  
it's herself she half-greets.

Soaked image grins back  
drenched in the greenness,  
all vanity vanished,  
she smiles:  
the world is made clean  
after the rain.

## Against The Tide

Only twelve, her father  
taken by forever,  
she holds a memory,  
his image a perfection,  
never to be tested by time.

She clutched it  
like an old sailor's locket—  
a permanent buoy  
in her mother's uncertain sea.

Now a wife and mother,  
she's abandoned  
her children's faithless father.

Against her waves of resistance,  
who could reach out their arms  
to embrace this ocean?

Both Poems Copyright © David Scheler

## Can't Get Him Out of my Mind by Karen Karfitz

Emily and Martin are married less than a year when they decide to buy a house. The apartment building they live in near the ocean will soon be converted to condos, but Martin views condo ownership like being in business with strangers. Athletic as well as wary of realtors, each weekend he rollerblades through his neighborhood in search of an interesting property. Before long he finds a small, neglected, one-story bungalow two blocks off Abbott Kinney and a ten-minute walk to the beach. On first inspection, Emily is grim; this house does not fit her idea of home. But Martin enthusiastically explains his restoration plans, and Emily and Martin become the proud owners of their new, albeit homely, home.

Emily likes living in her little house in Venice Beach. As frequently happens, the pair find temporary happiness in home remodeling. Focusing on one room at a time, each receives a make-over, good taste compensating for what they cannot yet afford. Six months after they began, interior renovations are well along. The exterior, however, remains the same as the day Martin first skated upon it. All work has stopped. Except for when the lights are on in the evening, the house looks un-lived in and, in a sense it is. For even though pretty Emily and successful Martin's marriage is often emulated and envied, three years after they first met they still don't know one another. This is because both harbor secrets, secrets of the most serious kind, secrets that lead to packs of lies.

The truth is that although Emily rejoices each time she takes a Kate Spade Gramercy Park-patterned cup out of her top-of-the-line dishwasher and places it back in its appointed spot in her new cabinet, a part of her is as forlorn as if she dropped it on her newly tiled kitchen floor. Her secret is a simple one; she married Martin by default. Emily is in love with David, a friend of hers at work. But before she could get up the courage to attempt to bring their relationship to another level, in one of life's cruel ironies, David winked at Emily's friend Jane on match.com and Jane winked back. Their first date at Starbucks catapulted to full fledged romance the following night during three courses at Il Sole; six months later they were married.

Soon after their wedding, Emily met Martin on a much needed Hawaiian vacation. They got along reasonably well and Martin looked handsome in a suit. He also shares her passion for the clean lines of mid-century modern and makes a good living. She assumes marriage to him will shut the door on David, and that now they can enjoy dinner

parties, movies and occasional weekends away as a foursome. Emily chooses to believe marriage will bring her closer to Martin and weed out all or at least most of the fantasies about David that surely no married woman should have. She is wrong. Too many nights sleep is impossible because Emily can't get David out of her mind. Employing twisted logic, she takes this as a sign that she and David are meant to be together, that a cosmic mistake occurred to keep them apart. She carries on with buying gourmet cheeses and excellent wines. She keeps perfect closets and perfect drawers. And she continues preparing perfect breakfasts, lunches and dinners for Martin, until the day comes—and she knows it will—when she will never do anything for him again.

During a small dinner party at her house Emily watches for cracks in David and Jane's marriage. Her good fortune comes sooner than anticipated. Both couples share a meal of broiled halibut and mushroom risotto that Emily made from scratch. Afterwards, as the men sit on the front porch, Emily and Jane clean the kitchen while finishing off a bottle of pinot.

"I've got to talk to you," Jane whispers, obviously distressed.

"What's the matter?"

"It's David. He's not the person I thought I married."

"Is anyone ever really?"

"Probably not, but believe me, we're in trouble. He comes home late every night, and he's even stopped bothering to make excuses. I don't know what to do."

"It'll pass. All marriages have their ups and downs as clichéd as that may sound."

"We haven't had sex in six months."

It takes Emily all the control she can muster not to show how pleased she is. As Jane's friend she feels slightly guilty but Jane is not her top priority and anyway, she loved David first. "I'm sure that happens far more often than people admit," Emily says, not believing that at all.

"I'll ride it out. Maybe you're right."

But a month later David leaves Jane. He doesn't offer much in the way of an explanation, but does let her stay in their condo while they decide what steps to take next. Emily is ecstatic. With nothing but the thoughts in her head to go on, she believes David left Jane to be with her. In her mind there can be no other reason. Soon he will contact her and they will breeze through life together, leaving their spouses behind. Every time the phone rings she runs to answer it. A few times it is David, but he's calling to speak to Martin. Emily is dumbfounded. Her fantasies have clouded her reality.

Emily is so thoroughly occupied thinking about David, she neglects to see that for all intrinsic purposes Martin has left her as well. He comes in late from work each night and creeps quietly into bed. Actually Emily is relieved. Her sexual fantasies have come to be all that she needs. Then one Saturday morning Emily gets what she wants; Martin tells her he's leaving.

"I'm so sorry, Emily," he says. His face is pale, his voice low. He looks down at the glossy oak planks splashed with sunshine.

This is Emily's final sign. She is free now to pursue David. She can't wait for Martin to pack some of his things and leave the house. Standing in the kitchen impatiently drumming her fingers on the granite counter, at last she hears the front door slam. Her heart beats furiously as she dials David's cell phone. She has no idea what she will say. She's certain, however, he will know why she's calling.

"Martin?" he says.

"No, David. It's me. Emily."

"Oh, hi."

Emily hesitates.

"Bad connection?" he asks.

"No, no. I thought you'd want to know...Martin left me."

"I know."

"But it only just happened."

"I'm sorry, Emily. No one ever plans these things."

"It's the way it's supposed to be. We can be together now."

"What did you say?"

"We can be together now. Isn't that what you want?"

"Haven't you spoken to Jane? I told her everything last week." But Emily has avoided Jane since her separation from David.

"What are you saying?"

"Me and Martin, Emily. This is about me and Martin."

Emily's fantasy careens to an end. The phone slips out of her hand and hits the floor chipping a pale yellow Mexican tile. Martin, she discovers, has a secret too.

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**SPECIAL FEATURE****Poetry Super Highway 2009  
Annual Poetry Contest Winner****Jim Knowles**

Jim Knowles is an engineer, artist, and poet from Andover, Mass. who grew up in Maine. Some of his poems appear in Mipoesias' *Best of Cafe Cafe* series, and his reviews have appeared in a Mipoesias webcast. He has been heard at New England open mic events.

Most recently, his poetry appears in the journal *From East to West*, and as first prize in the *2009 Poetry Superhighway Contest*. He always carries a Zebra 301 pen and a little pad, for those wicked little phrases that fly away, and dabbles in all forms.

<http://jimk-eclectics.blogspot.com>

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Specials thanks to Rick Lupert who single-handedly runs and maintains the [Poetry Super Highway](#).

## Interview With Jim Knowles

**Hi Jim, congratulations on winning the PSH 2009 Poetry Contest. First, please tell us a little about yourself.**

I grew up in rural places, in the state of Maine. My Dad was a doctor in the city of Portland. I was really into The Renaissance, the artistic/scientific mix. I'm left-hander with a non-localized brain. I also studied thinkers like Lao Tzu and CG Jung. I went to prep school at Phillips Andover, and then University of Maine at Orono. I wanted a wider range of students and the large course list of large land-grant University. The choice worked well, with a Physics major, a lot of Psychology, literature, and other samplings.

I got a microwave engineering job out of school, rode economic cuts down, and re-tooled for software in hard times, circa 1991. I had vested too much self-worth in my job. The rise of art and writing were a part of the re-tooling. The poetry grew alongside art, but at first just as "clever things to say". It's been about 8 years since I put a lot of time into it.

**Where do you find your inspiration?**

For poetry...I suppose the early resonances percolated in from the more possessed voices, like Blake and Rilke and Dylan Thomas. In philosophical times, Lao Tzu was a model for pithiness. Frost resonated with philosophical moods as well. Sampling many poets, from Edward Thomas to Anne Sexton, Berrigan, Joyce, and dozens of others. I get a lot of inspiration from current poets. Some for technique, others just for the spirit of the piece. The inspiration for a particular poem drops out of the sky frequently, though, unless I see something that needs a voice. Nowadays it all seems to feed on itself.

**Why poetry?**

It began with desire to explain things, to share thought. That's not easy. A central challenge of poetry, I think. "The Word" is important even now. We have to look everything up with words and phrases. They are the key, now more than ever. Phrases, actually. Nothing else works. I always liked poetry, and I realized it was practicing the most evocation with the least words. There are so many thoughts that need explaining. The sound and imagery, for their own sake, too.

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## **How do you go about writing a poem?**

There are a number of ways. Expanding on a key phrase, recalling an episode in life, annealing a random source, rebuttals to things read, notes on things I see and hear. I don't want to get stuck on particular things, or revisit an old issue too many times.

## **How long might one take?**

A really inspired poem might happen as 95% complete in minutes, although it needs a few visits over days to tune. Another might linger as a catch-phrase or an idea for weeks, or even months, and finally be built into something. It seems really variable. Sometimes I just can't address something and I have to quit. Other times it's practically fleshed out in a parking lot. I have to stop in the parking lot when that happens, or sit in the car without driving. For metered, it seems like there is a window of a day or two to rough its frame out. After that it's hard to keep it consistent in voice. Prose may take weeks to sharpen, but it seems to keep on the shelf.

## **Do you write to music?**

I used to, but it's distracting now. So many thoughts connect to other poems and thoughts. I replay music in memory sometimes, though. Two things in the music I use are the sound rhythm and the mood/tale. Sometimes the narrative of the mood can be used for different scenes and stories.

## **Describe your muse if he/she were a person**

There are multiple muses. I don't expect all of my poems to appeal to one personality. Some have an intended audience. Some are actually written for me to read in a certain style and/or accent, so I am a narrator or newcaster. I don't read aloud that way, though. In a classic muse sense, particular tunes I am into at the time serve up their singer as my muse, to answer, like Isobel Campbell or Victoria Legrand. I try for a muse with at least some chance of liking the piece....it gives the dream some distant credibility.

## **How would you define success as an author/poet?**

That's difficult in terms of poetry. I can only think of what is next, like a featured reading or a solid book. This journal feature is great,

coming as it does without some particular prior affiliation. One fantasy success would be helping to break through the public/poet barrier, whether or not it's my stuff, bringing some of the thrills to people without resorting to toys. I think the talent exists, but it's lost in a landslide, or suppressed. For personal success, simply being remembered in a few places in 10 years would be an amazing thing, but who knows, outside of a surprise public resonance.

### **Cash, fame or recognition?**

Cash is a strange wish in art, and perhaps even stranger in poetry, at least from my POV. Some recognition would be good, of course, that I'm not simply mad and rambling on. That must be true of every poet, going back to the birds. If you only wanted to connect with yourself you wouldn't submit things or go to events to speak. A prize works in strange ways among poets now. Placing 10th can get you more messages than placing 1st. I've seen other stories to confirm those general lines. If I could only figure out how to place 10th in 10 contests....hehe. I have a handful of real fans, and a few more would be great. There are some harsh deserts to cross in today's poetics, and a kind word is water on cracked lips. If you have a poet you like, find a way to slip them a good word. 'Tis the season of the existential crisis online. I take the chance of saying something and I leave comments where it looks like the brickwork is great but the mortar needs tucking (a moral boost). Reviews at Amazon as well, when something looks good. Anyway...for me it would be great to have someone I don't know be affected by the vision.

### **If the Writing Genie could grant you a single writing wish, what would it be?**

I have a fantasy about writing a story in sonnets. I get tired thinking about it. Since Genies are spectacular in their power, maybe the extra talent areas and energy could be whipped into my stir-fry. Making a collection of "proto-poetics" would be great: some semi-sense poetry that causes the reader to compose their own poetry, probes their own thoughts. Barring that, a small estate on a stunning coastal ridge in Maine with a cozy Athenium in a geodesic watchtower would be cool, might inspire. You did say a Genie, right?

## What are you working on now?

I'm adding to the collection of very-short poems. Not sure what to do with them, but I weed and sharpen them a lot.

I'm filling out my count of sonnets for potential metrical incursions.

I'm drilling sources and 'annealing' the word streams into either proto-poetry, poetry, or junk. This is actually a good source of unique phrase coining, if your imagination is up to it.

I'm doing some round-robin reading of poets, about a page per, and trying to get my nature-observation up and running again.

## Who are your favourite poets, authors and/or books?

A list, at this point...I'll go through the bookshelf and links.

- ❖ Rick Mullin, "Aquinas Flinched" (witty, great metricals. great sense of place)
- ❖ Ana Bozicevic, "Stars of the Night Commute" (surrealism, visionary)
- ❖ Pris Campbell, "Sea Trails" (sea journal, poetry, relationship autobio.)
- ❖ Amy King, "I'm the Man Who Loves You" (used as proto-po, zig-zag surrealism)
- ❖ Robert Frost, "A Boy's Will and North of Boston"
- ❖ Myronn Hardy, "The Headless Saints" (multi-type fusion, intense imagery)
- ❖ Xantippe 4/5 (a journal of contemporary material)
- ❖ John Ashbery, "Self-Portrait in a Convex Mirror" (I wish I could that)
- ❖ Tony Harrison, "Selected Poems"
- ❖ Amy King, "Antidotes For an Alibi" (surreal/post:resonance helps me decode)
- ❖ various links to Rilke
- ❖ Heaney, "The Haw Lantern" (more than other collections)
- ❖ links and samples, Edward Thomas
- ❖ Berrigan, "The Sonnets" (for proto-po, ideas)
- ❖ From those multi-poet collections: 3 collections with Anne Sexton in them

Key non-po:

- ❖ Marcus Aurelius, "The Emperor's Handbook" (the Hicks Bros. Translation)
- ❖ Lao Tzu, "Tao Te Ching"
- ❖ CG Jung, "Memories, Dreams, and Reflections"
- ❖ John Vigneaux Smyth, "The Habit of Lying"
- ❖ Frankfurt, "On Bullshit"
- ❖ The Dalai Lama, "The Universe in a Single Atom"

It's kind of a jumble.

### **What are you reading now?**

Other than sampling the above, I've been reading (in a somewhat normal way) Lauren Slater, *Welcome to my Country* (memoir of a PsychoTherapist) Sherman(editor), *African-American Poetry*, an anthology, 1773-1927.

### **When did you first start attending open mic events?**

I think it was about 2004.

### **Do you write for the paper or for an audience to hear?**

I write for the audience to hear it, and I practice being stirring. I do not end lines in question-marks unless they are real. I want some drama or mysticism or mythology to come through. I want it to breathe out, like a novel or a folk-tale, even if it's a haiku.

### **Is poetry the balancing artistic factor against your career in engineering?**

To some extent, as regards time, but job right now in my job now a lot of invention is called for, so the two reinforce the creative spirit in each other. When things were getting dismal before a layoff a few years back, I had more time to mess with things. The mood made me too pleased with some pieces, however. I'm trying for more quality now, although the sheer volume of ideas needs throttling. The balance with sleep would be something to improve.

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### **Why a Zebra 301?**

Ideas and phrases hit me at the grocery store and the stop sign. They fly away if they aren't written within a minute. I have my spring clamp and card stack, but what to write with? I like the gel-pens, but the winter here and dodgy paper cause skipping. The Zebra is dark for a ballpoint, always rolls on bad paper in bad weather, and it's sized for pocketing. The 301 survived as a tool for road salesmen and efficiency/index-card fanatics. I still use a Pilot G-2 sometimes. Both are color-fast. I actually tested some pens in a window. I toss most notes, but what if you wrote something and could barely read it in a year? That happened a few times. A Fisher "Space Pen" has been recommended, but they are expensive.

### **What poetry form appeals most to you and why?**

For writing, that seems to vary with time, since my poetic interests are wide. Right now, the full-up sonnet and short forms are big interests. The sonnet I see as a hope for lashing the public to the poetic community. I love the very short and short-line types, and they make a great training platform to work details. That helps later on working large prose, where you have bigger fish to fry, and the detailing has to be more instinctive.

For reading, I look through almost anything: prose, structured, anti-sense, surreal, rant, drama, as long as it really takes me, has a vision or at least a clever view. I like mockingbirds. From the song, you know a mockingbird loves the dove, the Chevy V8, the car alarm, and the whipoorwill.

# Poetry by Jim Knowles

## Empty Floor

He leans on a table  
at the edge of an  
empty dancefloor.

Waxed linoleum skips  
colored lights  
into his eyes, and onto the  
cinderblocks of the basement.

The singer is spacey,  
shrouds herself  
in the instrumental:  
she sounds a canyon away.  
PA speakers hiss and sizzle  
without the cushion of a crowd.

Dark and light,  
dark and light:  
his eyes are sore  
from the mirror ball.

A ninja yells at no-one  
in a pinball machine  
down the hall,  
in the quiet  
between tunes.

And still  
the drowsy nightingale  
spools out her songs,  
her web, gazing into  
the shoe-scuffed floor,  
looking past it,  
at memories of somewhere else,  
at 1 am.

## Good Night

You smile and lick your  
thumb and forefinger,  
reach for candle wick,  
and pinch it deftly.

A crackle,  
and the flame snaps off.  
My mind sees the last image  
for seconds, your shining eye,  
the horizon of your face,  
your soft profile:  
chin, neck, shoulder,  
your collarbone and breast,  
ribs, blankets  
arching over hips.

I reach to where  
the image floats.

You are still there,  
a ghost glowing warmly  
beneath my fingertips.

A faint heat sweeps across my face.  
The darkness has a wind,  
a breathing in.  
Lips land on me  
like birds come home.

## Blue Blue Sky

I knew raindrops before,  
But I did not feel  
The cold tracks on my face  
For hours after they dried.

I saw the Sun before,  
But I did not think  
Its' shining Was  
taunting me.

But I was never  
So blue before,  
From a wanting  
Bigger than the sun,  
Closer than the rain,  
That could not find  
Its having.

Because  
I had not met you  
before.

## The Committee

The Committee  
has read a picture book,  
and has never been so shocked,  
and has taken warm milk  
and gone to bed.

The Committee  
has added several members,  
but they have, unfortunately,  
fallen off again.

This Committee  
has the ultimate power,  
and will, in good time mind you,  
rescind the Earth.

The Committee  
has received disturbing allegations,  
and has adjourned to Las Vegas,  
for drinking, gambling, bankruptcy,  
marriage, and divorce,  
to honor our statistical traditions.

This Committee  
has few alternatives,  
so tyrant has been hired.

This Committee  
has the ultimate auditor  
reviewing the expert's summary  
of the engineer's study  
of the plumber's report.  
While it is not entirely clear,  
it appears a faucet is leaking.

.../Continued

The Committee  
will promulgate the  
appropriate legislation

if and when the offending activity  
ceases.

One more note:  
The Committee  
has recently expanded

into Poland.

## To a Goth

Nomi Fangirl

The night sky is a  
ceiling of dripping  
stones, and you rise,  
turning soils aside,  
or is it...  
a fleece throw.

Dark bathrobes are  
coming for me from  
a foggy direction.

You smell of diesel,  
nicotine, and bergamot,  
perhaps like the smoke  
from the ferryboats  
on the River Styx.

Quick, wrap me  
in your fold.  
We can be  
more alone together.

I have a thorn to  
bring a midnight sunrise  
to your dark horizon.

## Pennies For Ted

In fourth grade, I lived in a farmhouse.  
My room had a cast-iron grating, to let  
the heat of the kitchen woodstove up.  
When my mother worked there, the radio sound  
came through the grate, too:  
songs, news, and ads.

Some weekend mornings, the names of  
the Maine boys who died in VietNam would rise up.  
Kitchen work stopped. I came over to the grate.  
Name and town - name and town - name and town,  
like each small town had a hole in it.  
I thought of these little holes  
in towns, the lost boys.

I heard the name of our town a few times.  
I wondered if any of the boys were those  
Eagle Scouts who were invited to shoot  
M-16s into cinder blocks at the town dump.  
While they shot, a megaphone played  
the Green Beret song. They must have felt  
indestructible after ruining  
those fragile blocks.

Most of the Eagle Scouts were not  
the brash types. They were clever,  
the 'shiny pennies'. That seemed  
like a good analogy, I thought.  
Sometimes we went to a country restaurant,  
and while we waited in line, people would  
toss pennies into a well under a  
fiberglass waterfall. They made a wish,  
and they usually tossed in their  
shiniest pennies,  
for good luck.

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## Cheap Amusements by Ethel Rohan

My twin brothers, half of each other, never wanted anything to do with me. It was only when they turned thirteen and I turned ten, that they showed me the first glimmers of friendship, asking me to the park, pool, and their games. I'd light up like a dog to a treat at their invitations, but soon realized it wasn't my company they wanted. They wanted my best friend, Jules.

I don't know how Jules and I got to be such good friends. I was everything she wasn't, and a glance at our class photos and report cards said it all. I think our friendship thrived because I hoped she was contagious and she thought I made her look ever more capable and desirable.

One gorgeous summer day, hot enough to go naked and still feel so clammy you wanted to peel your skin off, my brothers asked Jules and me to play tag on the grassy triangle directly across from our house.

My brothers should have just called their game of tag what it was: let's catch Jules, wrestle her to the ground, and tickle her until she kisses us. Sarah, who's Sarah?

I cornered Jules behind the green park bench. "What are you doing?"

"What?" she asked breathlessly, pushing her blond curls behind her ears.

"You're supposed to be my friend, not some slut to my brothers." I only half knew what "slut" meant, but loved how it felt in my mouth, and echoed in my ears. How it coursed through me.

"Maybe I'm over being your friend." She ran off, giggling, and shouting to my brother Sammy. "You're it."

I looked at the grey stone by my foot, considering picking it up and throwing it at the back of her perfect head. Before I could even reach for it, she was on the grass under Sammy again, shrieking like a feather was tickling her insides.

I pulled daisies and pinched slits in their stems with my fingernail, stringing a necklace together. Jules kissed my brothers again and again. I stopped ripping the daisies from the dirt, imagining I could smell their blood.

Jules and my brothers stood next to the line of bushes, my brothers chanting "do it."

I sidled over.

Sammy held a snail between his thumb and forefinger, and was pushing it close to Jules's scrunched face. "You're chicken."

---

Jules snatched the snail, and kissed its underside before throwing it onto the grass.

The boys whooped and shouted. "She did it. Jules you're really something," they said, one echoing the other.

Jules turned to me, smirking, triumphant.

I grabbed the snail from the grass, and tossed it into my mouth. The shell crunched between my teeth, sounding loud in my ears. Its flesh like snot. I struggled not to gag, picturing the snail's antennas, eyes, heart, stomach, and bowels all smashing together between my teeth.

My brothers stared, gaping.

Jules's hand rushed to her mouth. "Oh my God."

Sammy was the first to laugh, sounding nervous. "Shit, Sarah."

"Holy cow, Sar," Stevie said.

I swallowed the last of the snail, and dragged my forearm across my mouth, my eyes never leaving their faces.

"I can't believe you did that," Jules said, part horrified, part impressed.

"You've no idea just what I can do." I strode past her and my brothers, straight as a knight's lance, hoping I could keep the snail down until I was at least out of eyeshot.

---

## Poetry by k.j.

### Concrete Jungle Safari

a stray rifle bullet exiled from  
a barrel gutters a bank mogul's  
mousse helmet hairdo, & brain  
matter sprays onto the ground  
as though the entire blundering  
flock of pigeons-that scattered-  
contracted a textbook case of  
bloody diarrhea just before they  
disappeared into the horizon like  
a handful of stale popcorn tossed  
to the air on a blustery, autumn day.

the crowd that was once a mob of unrelated passersby  
hoped to genitals that the ensuing silence would last long  
as a gluttonous Kodiak Bear's dreams in a cooling winter.

before they could lament their dropped lattes, blubbers  
from a young girl of dark beauty seduced every eye to her  
body where the ricochet had nosedived into her shin; while  
the sniper took a sip from his glass of water after cursing  
at the maple syrup oozing from the girl's leg for ruining  
any plans he had of stopping for coffeeand somewhere.

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## Poetry by Gene Barry

### A Ball of Malt

That night he stared into it for a few lifetimes, the drop with the extra 'e' that is, the older barmaid called it the Devil's spit and him the Red Rager, he didn't bother with his alcoholic mantras and lessons, his verbal dribbling and the shouts. He saved them for the walk home.

Nights when he'd feed from the top shelf he was to be avoided. He could introduce you to anyone. One night I met the OC, same name as himself of course who shot Three Black and Tans and I received a lesson on how to hate dead men and out of date systems.

Lifting the coffin in through his narrow low-ceiling hallway was a first for me. 'Bertold Brecht Poems 1913-1956' sat unfinished on a table. At the funeral the Red Rager wasn't mentioned by anyone and late in the evening we all climbed on to the top shelf and danced with cloven feet.

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## Point It Out To Me

I saw it in their wedding photograph.  
A hand-in-the-till expression that  
Fingered them every time.  
Stopped them from crossing over.

Earlier they had written their first paragraph.  
Taken each other for better or worse;  
In words that is, in words. Six decades  
Of virginity between them a curse. And

Later, years later their teeth pulled and  
Their old smiles automated they would  
Dodge the bullets of unfinished-business  
That loitered in their sleeping range.

Minefields were everywhere. Before  
I was tall I would often trace their steps  
On the intertwining sets of stepping stones  
In shoes as small as my awareness.

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# Poetry by Gabriel Ricard

## Genetics Carnival

He was usually too busy to have  
any kind of frenzy in his eyes.

But it still used to be  
that if you wanted  
to watch fury in action,  
then you'd go over  
and watch this guy work.

The fact that he wrote some  
of the best stuff I've ever seen  
almost didn't figure into it.

It was just the way he wrote.

You almost expected  
some kind of Jerry Lee Lewis effect  
on the keyboard when he was finished.

Motivation doesn't even describe it.

Neither does ambition.

He worked as though as he was trying  
to move a step ahead of everything.

Starting at his parents,  
who had another ten years  
of dying in front of them.

Going to his hometown  
which was better known  
as the patient God who knew  
that sooner or later everyone  
always came back around.

.../continued

Ending at the senior prom  
that didn't end so much as people  
just stopped being able to fit  
into the tuxedos and dresses.

If it had been the fire  
that all of us spend our lives  
wandering through,  
I always imagine his heels  
would have been down to the bone.

He just wrote  
and left it up to other people  
to decide if it was fear or just anger  
that kept him up past the death  
of the last midnight movie insomniacs.

I knew he was going to make it.

But of course,  
he never did.

He got older,  
finished high school,  
went to college,  
picked up a career in computers.

I couldn't tell you what happened.

If it was meds or too many  
rejection letters tucking him in at night.

The other day,  
I met up with him and his second  
son at a nearby McDonalds.

The kid was throwing French fries  
in his face while he told me  
that he sometimes looks back  
on those younger days.

.../continued

And when he does, he said,  
all he can do is laugh and try  
to imagine how he ever could  
have been so stupid.

Those were his words.

Not mine.

And me?

I've never had that look on my face,  
and I've never been able to write  
the way he did.

But I keep working anyway.

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## The Contributors

**Keith Armstrong**

No bio.

**Gene Barry**

No bio.

**Shome Dasgupta**

Shome Dasgupta lives in Lafayette, LA, and he teaches at South Louisiana Community College and University Of Phoenix Online. His writing has appeared in *Magma Poetry*, *Frame Lines Magazine*, *The Dead Mule*, *Lit Chaos*, *Cafe Irreal*, and elsewhere. He received an MFA in Creative Writing from Antioch University-Los Angeles.

**Karen Karlitz**

Karen Karlitz's work has appeared in the *Los Angeles Times*, *Long Story Short*, *Miami Herald*, *Beverly Hills 90210*, *Brentwood News*, and the anthology, *Freckles to Wrinkles*, among others. One of her stories was a Third Glass Woman Prize finalist, and another included in the 2007-2008 edition of *The Best of the Foliate Oak*. Currently she is submitting her first novel for publication, and working on a short fiction collection.

**k.j.**

kj lives in Orange County, CA. He hopes that his dog, Mr. Bear, is able to learn a great deal about civics from his encounters with the mailman. He has work forthcoming in *Yellow Mama*. He thinks Philip Larkin was damn fine.

**Allen Kopp**

Allen Kopp is a technical writer and lives in St. Louis, Missouri, USA. He has been published in Foliate Oak Literary Review and Temenos, and his work will appear later this year in *The Storyteller Magazine*, *Conceit Magazine*, and *The Bracelet Charm*.

**Ethel Rohan**

Born and raised in Dublin, Ireland, Ethel Rohan received her MFA in fiction from Mills College, CA. Her work has appeared in or is forthcoming from such journals as *elimaie*; *PANK*; *Storyglossia*; *Monkeybicycle (online)*; *Word Riot*; *mud luscious*; *Ghoti Magazine*; *The Los Angeles Review*; and *(So New) Necessary Fiction*, among many others. Her blog is at <http://straightfromtheheartinmyhip.blogspot.com>

**Gabriel Ricard**

Gabriel Ricard writes poetry, short fiction, novels, film and stage scripts, creative non-fiction, stand-up material and review work for books, films and music. He is the Assistant Editor to *Unlikely Stories* and a featured contributor

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at *The Modest Proposal*. Born in Canmore, Alberta, Canada he lives in Waverly, Virginia.

**David Scheler**

David Scheler has a philosophy degree and has been a jeweler, oil painter, and musician. When he is not working in his garden, he is imagining being in his garden. Journals in which his poems appear include *Avocet*, *Comstock Review*, *Main Street Rag*, *Mid-America Poetry Review*, and *Reed*.

**About The Front Cover**

This month's cover is a shot of a painting by the subject of our special feature, Jim Knowles.



Next Issue

**March, 2010**

Please see the website for details

[www.ranfurly-review.co.uk](http://www.ranfurly-review.co.uk)